

22-6

AIRGRAM

FOR RM USE ONLY

R	REP	AF
A	EUR	FE
A	CU	INR
	P	IO
	FBO	AID
VA	S/P	J/PM
R	COM	FRB
T	LAB	TAR
R	XMB	AIR
MY	CIA	NAVY
ID	USIA	NSA

A-309

UNCLASSIFIED

AIR POUCH

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
INFO : US Mission GENEVA

JOINT EMBASSY-USIS MESSAGE

FROM : AMEMBASSY VIENNA

SUBJECT : Austrian Media Reaction to President's ABM Decision.

REF : Vienna's 1265

RECEIVED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MP

REVIEWED BY *[Signature]* DATE *7/15/80*

DATE: March 19, 1969

ADS ☐ OF XDS ☐ EXT: DATE

TS AUTH. REASON(S)

ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐

DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☐

RELEASE DENIED ☐

PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

Austrian media reaction to President Nixon's ABM decision was factual and based predominantly on wire service reports. The tenor was not enthusiastic, but understanding. The emphasis was on the costs and modifications. Considerable criticism was expressed only by the Socialist and Communist press. Leading papers, e.g. Kurier and Die Presse (March 15), top-played the news.

The most important commentator, Hugo PORTISCH of TV, called the decision "a shrewd move, but not understood by critics." He said Nixon has a "trump card" because he will be able to negotiate with Moscow from a position of strength and possibly reach agreement that both the U.S. and Soviet ABM systems be abolished. In order to disarm, America must first be strong. Portisch added. He said this is the President's second trump card in 48 hours, the first being Senate endorsement of NPT so the Soviets know now it will depend only on Nixon whether the treaty is signed by America.

Four papers carried editorials. Independent Kurier (March 17) said: "Even experts disagree about the strategic and political advantages of ABM. Also the 'thin' system increases the danger of armament escalation between the super-powers, but the Americans hope for a better starting position for negotiations with the Russians."

Independent Die Presse (March 17) saw the President trying to give a "clear signal" to the Russians: "What kind of signal is it and why so hurriedly? The Russian leaders are faced with problems everywhere... and might be tempted to rely more on their own force in settling them. They might do so in Romania or Czechoslovakia

UNCLASSIFIED

FOR DEPT. USE ONLY

FORM 4-323

☒ In ☐ Out

Drafted by: GTCz:RMichael:jpr

Contents and Classification Approved by: FAO: *[Signature]*

Clearances: P: EBFord *[Signature]*

DCM: RHWhite *[Signature]*

COPYFLO-PSR

03:15:00:00:00:00

UNCLASSIFIED

Vienna A-309

2

while daring action is less likely against Yugoslavia or even China. It is against such a potential reaction of the Soviets... that (Washington) emphasizes the basis of rational (U.S.-Soviet) cooperation as the only basis for global 'crisis management'."

Socialist Arbeiter-Zeitung (March 16) alleged that the ABM system is "useless in military terms," but pointed out: "The Soviet Union shows understanding of the President's tightrope act since the Russians let it be known they are still interested in negotiations on arms limitations." The paper surmised the President wanted to reach this: "First, the 'hawks' including the defense secretary can somehow save face; second, the armaments industry is satisfied, at least for the time being, with additional billions of dollars; third, the opponents of the Sentinel program can see his willingness to reduce the dangerous waste of money."

In Linz, independent Oberoesterreichische Nachrichten (March 15) commented: "The die is cast. The new man in Washington was not spared an 'agonizing reappraisal.'... Nixon will be exposed to a storm of criticism although even an imperfect ABM system is better than the other two alternatives - surrender to atomic extortion or the use of one's own, still bigger arsenal of mass annihilation against an unscrupulous adversary."

MACARTHUR

UNCLASSIFIED